(b) whether it is a fact that even the first stage of the project which was expected to be completed by December, 1984, has not been completed so far;

(c) if so, what are the reasons for the delay and the escalation in cost in relation to cost estimated at the time of sanctioning the project; and

(d) by when it is likely to be completed?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANSI LAL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) The first stage i.e., parallel B. G. line from Tirunelveli to Milavittan (53 Kms.) has been opened to goods traffic on 6-5-1985.

(c) The work is being progressed according to availability of resources. The increase in cost over the cost estimated at the time of approving the project is due to mainly on account of increase of rates of materials and labour.

(d) Its completion will depend on availability of resources in the coming years.

Freight traffic

2527. SHRI K. VASUDEVA PANICKER: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) what was the freight traffic handled by the Railways during 1983-84 and 1984-85;

(b) what is the estimated freight traffic during 1985-86 and 1986-87;

(c) whether the existing railway system are in a position to handle the increased freight traffic; and

(d) if not. what measures have been taken or proposed to be taken by Government to meet the situation?

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI BANSI LAL): (a) The Originating revenue earning freight traffic during the years 1983-84 and 1984-85 was as under;

Year.	*Tonnage in millions,*
1983-84	230.12
1984-85	236.29 (Provisional)

(b) and (c). The budgetted target of revenue earning freight traffic for 1985-86 is 250 million tonnes. This target is expected to be achieved despite some constraints of locomotives, wagons etc. Assessment of target for the year 1986-87 has not been made so far.

(d) Does not arise.

Recommendation of the National Shipping Board

2528. SHRI K. VASUDEVA PANICKER: Will the Minister of SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether the National Shipping Board has submitted its report;

(b) if so, what are its major recommendations; and

(c) whether merger of sick and small Indian shipping companies has also been recommended if so, whether the recommendation has been accepted by Government?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT (SHRI Z. R. ANSARI): (a) No, Sir.

(b) and (c) Do not arise.

Ship waiting for berths at major ports

2529. SHRI BISWA GOSWAMI:
DR. SHANTI G. PATEL:

Will the Minister of SHIPPING AND TRANSPORT be pleased to state:

(a) whether there are large number of shipsjvessels waiting for berths at major ports like Calcutta, Bombay, Visaknapatnam and Madras;